

Connecticut General Assembly  
Appropriations Subcommittee on Elementary and Secondary Education  
Public Hearing  
March 3rd, 2015  
Testimony of Marianne Stefanov, South Windsor, Connecticut

Thank you, Senator Slossberg, Representative Fleischmann, and members of the Committee for allowing me to testify today.

As a South Windsor resident, I'm often asked why I chose to enroll my daughter in a magnet school. South Windsor schools are very good and one of the reasons families move here. Students are offered a wide variety of classes, athletics, and activities. Graduates have achieved success in college and beyond. My daughter attended Two Rivers Magnet Middle School and is currently a freshman at the Greater Hartford Academy of Aerospace and Engineering (GHAAE) not because these schools are better, but because they are different.

Diversity is the heart of that difference. Sixty-eight percent of GHAAE students are minority; almost half are economically disadvantaged compared to 20% and 9%, respectively, at SWHS. While GHAAE students have a shared interest in STEM, they are learning from, working with and developing relationships with others from different racial, religious, cultural, and socio-economic backgrounds. As a parent, my hope is that this experience will prepare them to live in and lead an increasingly diverse and divided America.

The student population at GHAAE numbers fewer than 400 students, one third that of South Windsor High School (SWHS). For students such as my daughter, a small learning community is important. Teachers and staff interact with every child during their tenure as students. This level of engagement has helped my bright but quiet, rather shy child blossom. Thanks to the encouragement of teachers at Two Rivers, she took two high school classes in eighth grade, participated in math and environmental competitions, and acted as the ninth juror in "Twelve Angry Men". Her teachers at GHAAE are likewise encouraging not only academic excellence, but also participation in a variety of activities.

I am grateful to have a choice of local and magnet schools for my child.

Marianne Stefanov  
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